

Exhibit No. 8Date 4-10-07 #2Bill No. HB406**Flathead City-County Health Department**

1035 First Ave. West Kalispell, MT 59901

(406) 751-8101 FAX 751-8102

www.flatheadhealth.org

Home Health Services  
751-6800 FAX 751-6807WIC Services  
751-8170 FAX 751-8171

April 9, 2007

Trudi Schmidt, Chair  
Senate Finance and Claims Committee  
Montana Senate  
PO Box 200500  
Helena, MT 59620-0500

Re: House Bill 406 - The Community Health Center Support Act

Dear Senator Schmidt:

On behalf of the Flathead City-County Board of Health please accept this testimony in strong support of House Bill 406, an act that would expand access to health care services by establishing a grant program for proposed and existing community health centers.

The Flathead City-County Board of Health has recognized a need for assisted primary medical care for many years. In fact we have applied four times for federal assistance to establish a federally funded community health center for the citizens of Flathead County. Three times we have been denied funding. One reason given for not funding Flathead County is the fact that we have very small minority populations. I guess the reviewers believe that only populations with large percentages of minority populations deserve subsidized primary health care. We in Flathead County take exception to this point and offer the following information:

- According to the federal guidelines, Flathead County has over 27,000 residents that would be eligible to seek care in a community health center setting. The prime eligibility criteria are set at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.
- Flathead County has the fourth largest county population living at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. Also noteworthy is the fact that 10,270 residents of Flathead County have incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level.
- Five census tracts in Flathead County have been designated Medically Underserved Areas with an underserved population of 23,139 in those census tracts. This is the second highest underserved population without access to a community health center in the State of Montana.
- Flathead County has been granted designation as a Low Income Dental Health Professional Service Shortage Area (HPSA) by the federal government as only five dental providers take new Medicaid patients and none provide service on a sliding fee scale basis.
- According to the University of Montana, the Flathead Region had the highest regional medically uninsured rate at 29% compared to a state-wide average of 22%.



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Ext

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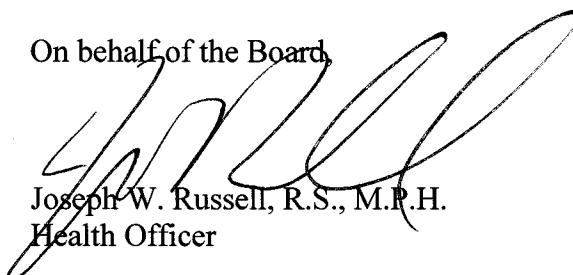
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Startling statistics for a community that is approximately 96% white and considered affluent by most of the state.

The other primary reason provided for not funding Flathead County is that we do not already operate a primary care clinic styled in the manner of a community health center. It seems a bit ironic that we should be operating a primary care clinic to serve our underserved so that we would be in position to receive federal funding to operate a primary care clinic. Where are we to find this sort of funding required to operate a primary care clinic? There are two volunteer clinics that operate in Flathead County on a very limited basis – as they depend on donations of money from the hospitals and time from the health care community. The volunteer clinic in Kalispell started out operating one evening per week and has curtailed their operation to three hours every-other-week and takes people by appointment only. The dental side is essentially closed as the primary dental provider to serve this population is Representative Bill Jones. When he is home he does everything he can to help but also operates his own dental practice. They stopped putting names on the waiting list for dental services when it reached 850.

If passed as it has been presented, HB 406 has the potential to provide essential primary care services to the community of Flathead and put us in position to obtain sustainable federal funding. The majority of other states have adopted this very same model to provide greater access to health care for all their citizens. We hope you will take the first step in making this a reality in Montana by providing your full support to this bill.

On behalf of the Board,



Joseph W. Russell, R.S., M.P.H.  
Health Officer

CC: Members of the Senate Finance and Claims Committee



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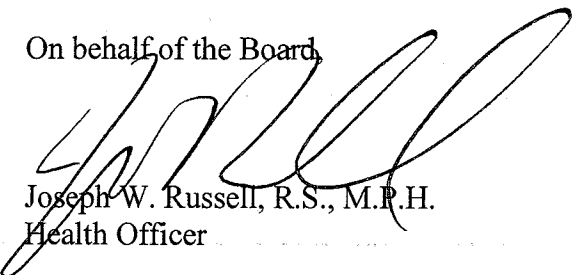
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On behalf of the Board,



Joseph W. Russell, R.S., M.P.H.  
Health Officer

CC: Members of the Senate Finance and Claims Committee

*Flathead County*  
**Board of Commissioners**

(406) 758-5503

Joseph D. Brenneman  
Gary D. Hall  
Dale W. Lauman



February 8, 2007

Representative John Sinrud, Chair  
House Appropriations Committee  
Montana House of Representatives  
P. O. Box 200400  
Helena, Montana 59620-0400

RE: HB 406 – The Community Health Center Support Act

Dear Representative Sinrud:

The Flathead County Board of Commissioners fully supports House Bill 406, short titled the Community Health Center Support Act. If passed, the Act would provide essential resources to provide primary care services to our medically-underserved population in Flathead County.

Flathead County has been attempting to secure funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the United States Department of Health and Human Services for the past several years. It is disappointing to the Board that we have not been successful to date.

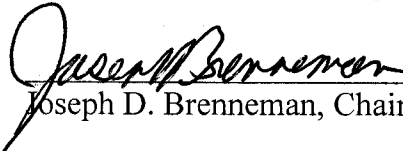
There is a need for a Community Health Center in Flathead County for the following reasons:

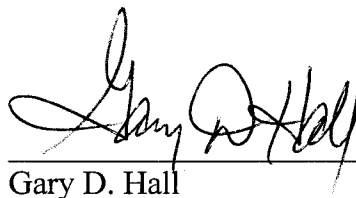
- Flathead County is the only major population center in the state that does not have a federally funded health center.
- Flathead County has over 27,000 residents that would eligible to receive service in a Community Health Center. This equates to the amount of people living in Flathead County with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

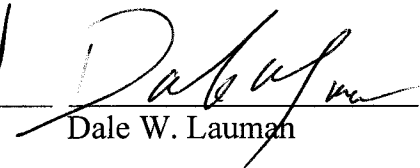
House Bill 406 would provide funding support for two new-start community health centers and also make available funding to expand services in areas of the state with existing health center. As these state-supported community health center receive funding from the federal government, money would then be made available to fund additional new starts or to expand services where necessary. This funding made available through HB 406 could provide essential primary care services to the many medically underserved citizens of Flathead County.

Please support House Bill 406.

Sincerely,  
FLATHEAD COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

  
Joseph D. Brenneman, Chairman

  
Gary D. Hall

  
Dale W. Lauman